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Mesophleps ochracella (Turati, 1926) new to Italy (Lepidoptera: Gelechiidae)

M. Pinzari & M. Pinzari

Abstract

Mesophleps ochracella (Turati, 1926), an interesting species, was found for the first time in Basilicata, Italy.
KEY WORDS: Lepidoptera, Gelechiidae, *Mesophleps ochracella*, Italy.

Mesophleps ochracella (Turati, 1926), nueva para Italia
(Lepidoptera: Gelechiidae)

Resumen

Mesophleps ochracella (Turati, 1926), una interesante especie, fue encontrada por primera vez en Basilicata, Italia.
PALABRAS CLAVE: Lepidoptera, Gelechiidae, *Mesophleps ochracella*, Italia.

Introduction

In the context of an ongoing study on the biology of butterfly endangered species (PINZARI, 2016a, 2019a; PINZARI *et al.*, 2017, 2019) and Lepidoptera fauna in Italy (PINZARI, 2016b, 2019b, 2020; PINZARI *et al.*, 2018; PINZARI & PINZARI, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c) we focused our attention on little-known species in central Italy.

In recent times, our research has also been extended to the South of Italy and to the Islands with encouraging results (PINZARI, 2019b; PINZARI & PINZARI, 2019c) which showed how much the fauna and biology of Lepidoptera in southern Italy are still scarcely known and lead to a further attention.

This paper illustrates a new result of the survey campaign carried out in Basilicata in July 2019: the finding of *Mesophleps ochracella* (Turati, 1926).

Materials and methods

The genus *Mesophleps* Hübner, [1825] includes five species in Europe (LI & SATTLER, 2012): *M. silacella* (Hübner, 1796), *M. corsicella* (Herrich-Schaffer, 1856), *M. oxycedrella* (Millière, 1871), *M. trinotella* Herrich-Schaffer, 1856, and *M. ochracella* (Turati, 1926). In Italy are present four species: *M. silacella* and *M. corsicella* everywhere; *M. oxycedrella* in Sicily and Sardinia (BALDIZZONE *et al.*, 1995; LI & SATTLER, 2012); specimens of *M. trinotella* that were collected in Liguria, Sardinia and Sicily have been examined and determined by LI & SATTLER (2012).

M. ochracella is present in Europe, Spain (including Balearic Islands), France (Alpes-Maritimes), Malta, Greece (Lakonia, Crete), in north African countries as Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and probably in Turkmenistan (TURATI, 1926; NEL & NEL, 2003; VARENNE & NEL, 2011; LI & SATTLER, 2012; VAN NIEUKERKEN & KARSHOLT, 2019).

Collecting site: The survey on Lepidoptera fauna in South of Italy was carried out on 8-14 July 2019 at Marina di Pisticci (MT) both on the coastal dune and in the cultivated areas in the surrounding of Masseria Macchia Relais San Pio & Marina. Moths were light-trapped by Mixed Light 160 W lamp mounted in fixed sites with electricity available.

Species identification: The moth species was identified by external habitus (figs 1 A-B) using the taxonomic characters reported by LI & SATTLER (2012). The species determination is based on the broadly triangular ventral tuft of the labial palpus segment 2 (fig. 1 D). This characteristic is sufficient to distinguish the studied species from the other European species. Female genitalia is very similar to *trinotella*, but the basally broader ductus seminalis allows to tell apart the female of *ochracella* from *trinotella*. The other parts of genitalia are fully identical to those of other congeneric species; they are shown in fig. 2 C.

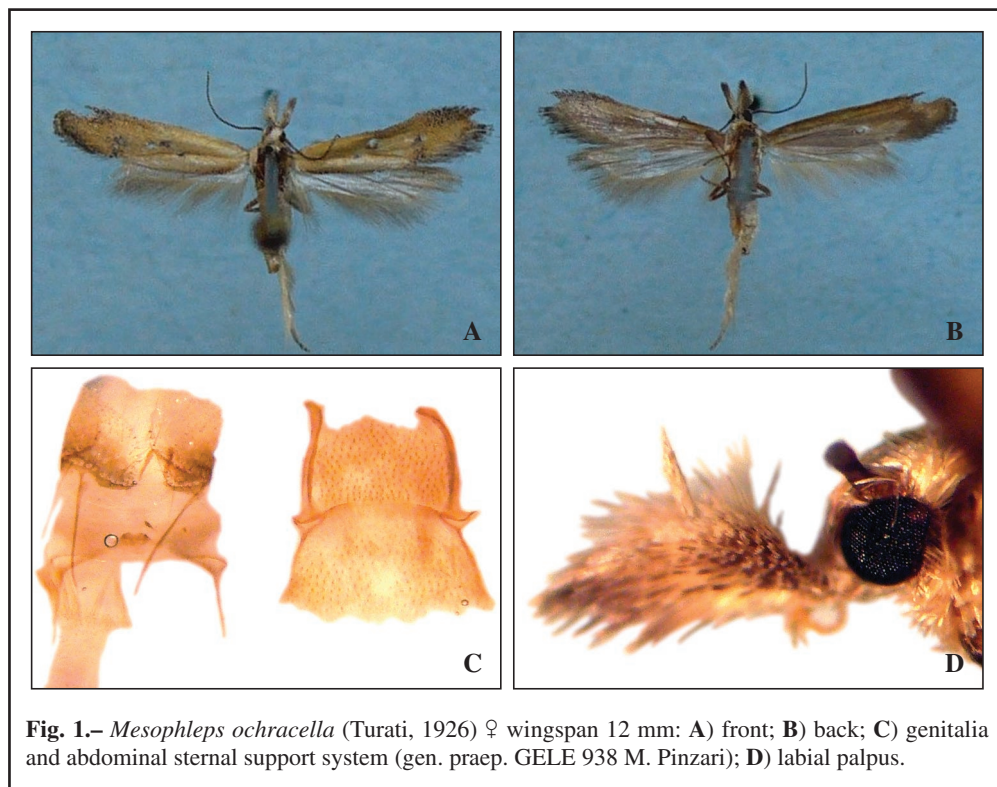
Results

Mesophleps ochracella (Turati, 1926)

Record: ITALY, Basilicata, Marina di Pisticci (MT), at sea level, 1 ♀, 6-VII-2019, M. Pinzari and M. Pinzari leg.

Notes: The specimen was attracted by lux at 10 p.m. within an area mainly cultivated with citrus groves some kilometres away from the coastal dune.

Biology: Host-plants are unknown, but on account of the close relationship to *M. trinotella* some species of Cruciferae are likely (LI & SATTLER, 2012).



Remarks and conclusion

The microlepidoptera fauna of the South of Italy and especially Basilicata are still relatively scarcely known as also shown by the recent discovery of *Epicallima icterinella* (Mann, 1867) (PINZARI, 2019b). Therefore, the collecting of *Mesophleps ochracella* (Turati, 1926) for the first time in Italy is not a great surprise. It is in fact a circummediterranean species that is known of Spain, France, Greece, Crete and North Africa, and was essentially lacking only in Italy.

From the coastal areas, we expect new surprises: dedicated investigations would be needed. But surprises for the Italian Lepidoptera fauna, we expected from the revision of old published data on records of which the specimens are preserved in museum and private collections. In fact, in view of the revision of *Mesophleps* by LI & SATTTLER (2012), the finding of *M. ochracella* shows the need for review of the data recorded on other congeneric species in Italy.

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